

health issues. Studies show that an average of 20 particles of microplastic has been found in 10 grams of human stool. "If our findings are remotely representative, annual microplastic consumption could exceed several hundred thousand [particles]," authors of the Environmental Science and Technology concludes. Even in cases when physical plastics pose little to no risk to human health, potentially harmful chemicals are added to plastics to modify appearance or functionality. Some of these chemicals include BPA and phthalates which have each been found to disrupt hormones in humans. BPA has been linked to increasing the risk of birth defects, metabolic diseases, and other health problems. Among other health risks, phthalate exposure has been found to reduce testosterone levels in male fetuses.

Already, states including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon and Vermont—have successfully banned single-use plastic bags. In addition to banning plastic bags, Vermont's SB 113 will place restrictions on single-use straws and polystyrene containers. These few states are leading the initiative in a fight against an indestructible material. When it comes to plastic, there are plenty of realistic alternatives that we should be enforcing instead of fighting against it. Developing and making these alternative products affordable and more readily available is a necessary focus in working toward a more healthy environment. Plastic is a major contributor to climate change. A national ban on single-use plastic is a simple start and necessary step toward saving the future of our planet.

GRIFFIN WARYAS, BELLOWS FALLS UNION HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

Ninety-Seven years ago, Frederick Banting discovered insulin. However, he decided not to put his name on the patent; he believed it was against the Hippocratic Oath to profit at the expense of patients. So, his team sold the patent to the University of Toronto for a dollar, in hopes that anyone who needed the medicine could afford it. Yet, today, ninety-seven years since the patent was sold for one dollar, people are dying because they cannot afford the insulin they need to survive.

Nicole Smith-Holt's son Alec died because of this. When his 26th birthday hit, he was no longer covered by his parent's insurance, and his monthly insulin costs skyrocketed to a staggering \$1,300 a month. Alec could no longer afford his medicine and passed away shortly after.

Unfortunately, this isn't an incredibly rare case. The costs of the most popular types of insulin have tripled over the past decade, the average cost per month has risen to \$450 a month, and 1 in 4 diabetes patients now either is forced to take partial doses or skip over their life-saving medicine. Unfortunately, Insulin is not the only drug being used as a profit machine by corporate monsters.

In 2007, Mylan bought the rights to the EpiPen device. At that time, the cost of a set of two injectors was \$94. A little over a decade later, the cost is over \$700. And with 3.6 million prescriptions being written last year, and the net price to make a set being \$60, Mylan made about 2.3 BILLION dollars in profit. They know people will buy it regardless of price because they have to. This leaves the life of uninsured, poor individuals in the balance.

To fix this, these large pharmaceutical companies need to be trust busted. They are buying off competition and abusing the broken American health care system to pad their pockets at the expense of the working class. Not to mention, they have teamed up with the insurance companies to ensure prof-

it at every corner. While these companies are businesses and should be allowed to operate as such, there comes a time when the government must protect us from them. As the great Teddy Roosevelt once said, "We draw the line against misconduct, not against wealth."

We need to employ the trust-busting laws set up in this nation to prevent these monopolies from preying on our citizens. To do this, we need to take the corruption out of Washington. In the time between January 1st, 2017 and October 16th, 2018, 34 lawmakers received at least \$100,000 including the House Republican majority leader. Drug companies should be banned from funding campaigns to prevent the purchasing of their economic safety. Another law that should be employed is a Sensible Drug Pricing Act. This would allow the companies to continue to make money but also allow poor Americans access to drugs that are relatively cheap to make, with a control on the pricing.

KYLE WILKIN, MISSISQUOI VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

Every day people experience struggle of some sort; they struggle in a class or have to work harder than anticipated to complete a goal, but some people struggle more than others. Working hard, people may find it impossible to improve; there may be something blocking their way or restricting their ability to complete a task. In situations like that people search for help; they turn to the people around them hoping to find support, so oftentimes people either find support, or they find indifference. When people's basic needs aren't met, they are left to fend for themselves. In the United States there are a total of 552,830 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2018. People who are homeless are in need of people to support them.

The first potential solution could be to allocate more money to fund social workers to help homeless people. Working with people who are homeless, social workers will be able to help them find housing. According to the Congressional Budget Office, in 2018 \$623 billion were spent on defense; if some amount of that money was given to the comparatively low amount of \$93 billion spent on education, training, employment, and social services combined, more people could work with those who are homeless to find housing. By making more social workers available, people who are homeless will be able to more easily access support.

The second solution would be to support Housing First. Housing First is centered on the belief that everyone can achieve stability in permanent housing directly from homelessness and that stable housing is the foundation for pursuing other health and social services goals. Housing First is a way to find people, who are in need of it, permanent housing while giving them the support they need. By helping people find permanent housing, they are able to continue their lives and pursue goals that will not be available if they did not have housing.

The third potential solution is making mental health facilities more available for homeless people. According to a survey done in 2015 by The Department of Housing and Urban Development, 25 percent of the American homeless—140,000 individuals—were seriously mentally ill at any given point in time. Forty-five percent of the homeless—250,000 individuals—had any mental illness. A serious mental illness is defined as a disruption in normal thinking, feeling, mood, behavior, interpersonal interactions, or daily functioning by Merriam-Webster. By making mental health facilities more available and destigmatized for homeless people, they will be better equipped to live and be successful

on their own. Homeless people need thy help and support of those around them; by giving people who are homeless options and the support they need they will be able to start to support themselves and find permanent.●

## MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Roberts, one of his secretaries.

## EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

## MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:44 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, without amendment:

S. 3607. An act to extend public safety officer death benefits to public safety officers whose death is caused by COVID-19, and for other purposes.

S. 3637. An act to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend lease protections for servicemembers under stop movement orders in response to a local, national, or global emergency, and for other purposes.

S. 4148. An act to extend the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Program of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the following resolution:

H. Res. 1054. Resolution relative to the death of the Honorable John Lewis, a Representative from the State of Georgia.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 886) to direct the Attorney General to establish and carry out a Veteran Treatment Court Program.

The message further announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3504) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for improvements to the specially adapted housing program and educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4920) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for an exception to certain small business contracting requirements applicable to the Department of Veterans Affairs procurement of certain goods and services covered under the Ability One program, and for other purposes.